



From left: Mentor John Aruagha-Ndukwe, students Kareem El-Beshbeeshy, Om Agarwal and Umar Timbo, and student mentor Samuel Okoroafor. They're part of Oxford School's FIRST Lego League zteam, one of three Canadian teams heading to Washington, D.C. next month as finalists for the FIRST Global Innovation Award. ZANE WOODFORD/METRO

These Halifax kids have a 'wild' idea

ANIMALS

Teens designed solution to help Sable Island's native horses



Yvette d'Entremont
Metro | Halifax

A group of students from Oxford Junior High are heading to Washington, D.C. next month as finalists in a global robotics competition.

The team is among 20 international finalists, and one of only three from Canada, chosen to attend the seventh annual FIRST Global Innovation Award Ceremony in Washington from June 18 to June 20.

The Grades 7 to 9 students designed a solution to help solve the problem of the wildness of Sable Island's horses being

compromised by interaction with humans and their buildings on the island.

"What I found the most (challenging and interesting) was building the prototype that actually does this thing in real time," explained Grade 9 student and team member Om Agarwal.

"We used basically micro controllers and infrared and ultrasonic sensors that collect data of animals that are in a close range that we've set for them to be detected. Once they are, there is a speaker module that emits a sound that is intolerable for the horses so it basically acts as a deterrent."

The students started working on the project in October. The team, officially called Imhotep's Legacy Academy's FIRST Lego League (FLL) team, Legos R Us, is part of an initiative between Dalhousie University and several community partners.

"The idea is to increase the participation of African Nova

Scotian students, students of African descent, in (fields of) science, technology, engineering and mathematics," said FLL coach and program manager John Aruagha-Ndukwe.

Although he initially expected to start preparing the team for competitions next year, the group's mentor Samuel Okoroafor was amazed by the amount of work the students put in as they won awards leading up to the competition in June.

Okoroafor is a third year electrical engineering student at Dalhousie University. He's 17, so closer in age to the students than most mentors.

"To be able to go this far is overwhelming," he said.

The students are now working on raising the remaining funds needed to get them all to Washington. As of Monday afternoon they'd secured almost \$8,500 of their \$16,000 goal via their online funding page.